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By Edward W.
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WASHINGTON.—Fourteen months ago, retired Admiral William F. Raborn Jr. sat in the same high-backed leather chair and was praised for the qualifications he was bringing to his new job as Central Intelligence Agency director.

Now the Admiral had resigned, and his successor, Richard M. Helms, 53, an old hand in the intelligence business, was before the Senate Services Committee for a friendly hearing on confirmation of his appointment. An on-looker could only wonder about how long it would be before Mr. Helms would depart, for one reason or another, and the cycle would begin again with yet another CIA director.

The guess is offered here that Mr. Helms will preside long and well over CIA. He knows his work as thoroughly as any American can. He has been an intelligence professional for 23 years, which is just about as long as the United States has had a major league intelligence agency.

He has been stationed at CIA headquarters here since 1947, rising steadily through the ranks. He has learned how to deal with the White House, the State Department, the Pentagon, and the Congress at the highest and most delicate levels.

Mr. Helms is a genuine professional. If any man can successfully fill the job of running the CIA and serving as President Johnson's intelligence adviser, it is Dick Helms.

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But Mr. Helms is certain to come under attack, not for having anything within himself but because of his position at the helm of an agency fighting in the front lines of the cold war.

Some Americans believe the cold war is over and done and that rapprochement with Communism is the order of the day. If they are correct, it follows that CIA should be very different from the organization it has always been. If the United States is in no danger now or in the



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foreseeable future from Russia or China, there is no reason for CIA to be anything more than an effete collection of library researchers.

On the other hand, every President since Harry Truman has been convinced that a Communist power in possession of deliverable nuclear warheads is a threat to this nation and that it would be folly not to guard against a surprise attack. Over-simplified, this is the reason for the CIA and for the actions it takes around the world to keep Washington informed and to defend the cause of freedom.

Future attacks on Mr. Helms and his organization will probably be variations on the standard themes that have been heard for years. In essence, they are that CIA is a super-government unto itself, running wild around the world getting the United States into unseemly messes, and courting nuclear war for the fun of it.

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At the confirmation hearing, Mr. Helms gave answers which the Senators knew to be the truth. He testified that CIA does not try to influence American policy in any direction but does try to "present the facts as straight-forward and objectively as possible." CIA's actions are approved in advance by heads of other agencies, he said. The agency's immediate boss is the President, and next are the Secretaries of State and Defense.

Cynics may discount Mr. Helms' statements as self-serving. If so, they should look to the judgment of Missouri Senator Stuart Symington, who first observed CIA years ago as a National Security Council member, and more recently as a member of a Senate CIA subcommittee and as an independent thinker who collects his own facts.

This year he journeyed to 15 foreign capitals, from Asia through the Middle East to Europe. The American Ambassador in every capital reported he was "not only satisfied but pleased" with CIA activities in the country, the Senator said. In every case, CIA agents operated within American policy, the Ambassadors said, and several reported they could not function without CIA's help.

Wearily, Sen. Symington and Sen. Henry Jackson agreed that the assaults on CIA will be made for as long as the agency is performing effectively. The time to worry about CIA will be when these criticisms vanish.